

VBCOP – A Unifying Campaign Strategy Model

Chris Rose www.campaignstrategy.org March 2009

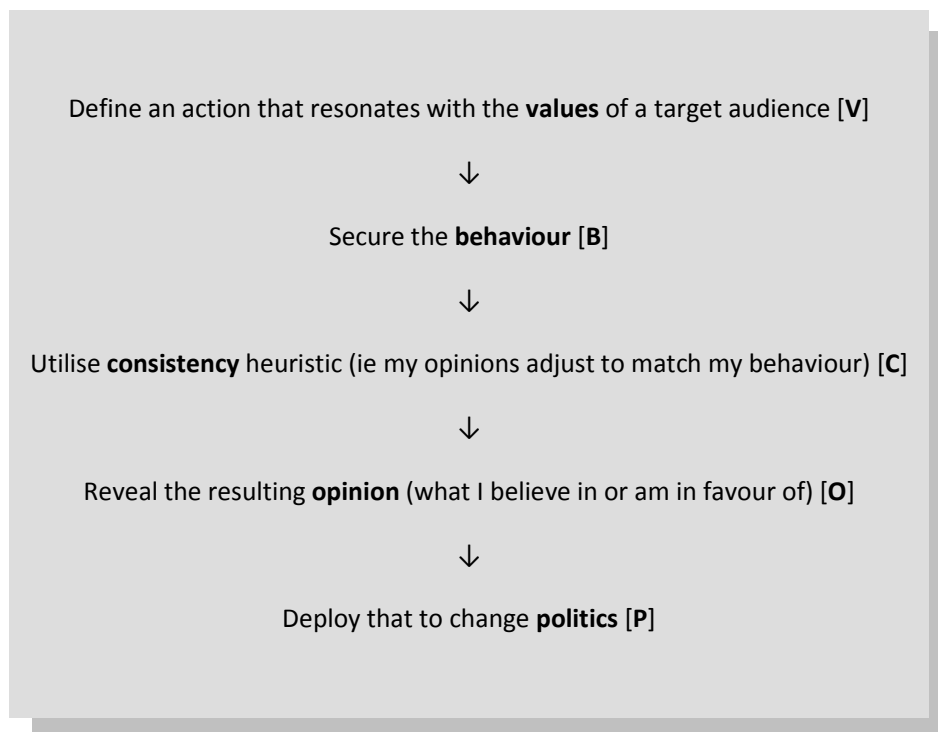
Introduction

Below is an outline of a new strategy model which provides a simple link between the common desire of social campaigners to influence opinion and politics with values and behaviour.

I also give an example of how this might be applied, focused on the Values Mode ‘Golden Dreamer’ which values surveys have shown is currently relevant to ‘climate change’ in the UK, and quite likely to a number of other issues and in some other countries.

VBCOP stands for Values, Behaviour, Consistency, Opinion, Politics and the model is basically this:

VBCOP model



Ideally, campaign planners should start by using their knowledge of the dynamics of the issue and the role of politics, to plan backwards, for example, through the sort of opinion required: whose opinion, which ways it is measured, which channels and messengers are used to relay it, etc. The behaviour would also ideally be one that was desirable ‘in itself’ [ie contributed incrementally to a solution]. However it is more important that the behaviour is strategic [1] – it might have an indirect effect rather than any additive direct solution effect – and in this model it is assumed that the end delivery is actually political.

Tools that could be used in those planning steps include issue mapping [2], critical paths [3], and for messengers, channels and contexts at the opinion-relaying stage, CAMPCAT analysis [4].

Why VBCOP Should Work

Values

Decades of research shows that our values, in the sense of social values, beliefs we hold about what makes sense and how the world works, underly behaviour. Models such as those used by Cultural Dynamics (often discussed in this newsletter), Young & Rubicam's 4Cs or Environics Social Values Groups map such values essentially by segmenting people according to unmet psychological (Maslowian) needs which drive behaviour [5].

Consistency

Qualitative researchers who use mechanisms like focus groups or depth interviews to uncover the form and dynamics of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes are well aware that stated opinions very often are moulded by behaviours. Consequently, opinions offered about a hypothetical behaviour are likely to be less reliable as to what people might really do than their existing behaviours, or their (unconscious) values. As a general 'heuristic' or rule of thumb, (ie it is more often right than not) opinion flows from behaviour. This is captured in the so-called "Consistency Heuristic", evidenced in experiments and studies by Cialdini and others [6]. In essence, to maintain our belief we are sane people whose views about what makes sense match our behaviours, if we change behaviour we then adapt our relevant opinions to suit it.

Cialdini gives examples of its use in fundraising (eg people who are told their town is known to be generous, will then be more so) and sales (once you started on a purchase you are likely to continue even if the offer deteriorates) and issue adoption (do a small thing eg display a sign and you are more likely to do a bigger one when asked, than those who hadn't done the small thing). We can see the effect in changing views about efficacy of environmental actions.

A 2005 UK survey found 70% of people saw 'recycling as the solution to environmental deterioration, compared to 46% in 1999'. [7] Was this rapid increase of belief in the efficacy of recycling the result of systematic analysis by the public? Unlikely. More probable is that it was the result of the 'consistency heuristic'. More people were recycling, so more people ranked recycling as effective: "I do it, therefore it makes sense": behaviour leading opinion.

This can therefore be used to secure opinion changes where argument or information is not going to work; which is in many cases, and in nearly all cases where an 'issue' is well developed, when people have adopted 'positions' or views on it that they are conscious of. Indeed, because of the consistency effect, if you go to someone with an established 'bad' behaviour and tell them to change it, they are likely to deploy their reasoned opinion as to why it makes sense, to fend you off.

So the trick is first to get them to do the behaviour, not to develop the opinion. This means working with their values, to promote, sell or market the action. For example, in the UK at present there are Settlers, the most socially conservative (security-driven) Maslow Group and normally last in line to take up any new behaviour, who are buying quite expensive wood burners and solar water heating.

The reason they give is entirely in tune with their values – safety and security: a defence against uncertainty of power supplies and rising costs. It is not to help ‘the planet’ (which is the typical inner-directed Pioneer values-driven reasoning for the same behaviour. An outer-directed Prospector might have bought them to add status to their home and lifestyle: the thing-to-have

The result then is that the action becomes “right”. Each values group will have its own reasons so, in this example, there are three different ways of it making sense to buy solar panels.

Making Opinion Count

How can we then use this new opinion? It is advisable to work on it gradually with incremental developments that do not jar with a person’s identity. It would be a mistake to immediately try to get our Settler or Prospector to become a climate activist for example (as both tend to avoid controversy for different reasons) but we could do press work pointing out what a great contribution such people are making to achieving national or local climate targets. And we could call for their contribution to be recognized. The government should congratulate them, indeed reward them, say, by giving them a tax break or paying them for their rooftop energy contribution. That is the sort of campaign they would be more likely to support. If it succeeded, the Settlers in particular would see the solar-payments as a ‘right’ and fight not to lose it (another heuristic – people generally being more concerned not to lose something than to gain something).

So at the revealing opinion stage there are a host of possibilities for making the opinions count.

Politics

We could attach response mechanics to the newly purchased product or other behaviour, or displayables such as a sticker for a car or window. We could run surveys to show the types and numbers of people who think that X or Y is ‘effective’ or a good thing or ‘should be encouraged’. We could facilitate social networking with rewards. Prospectors for instance tend to like showing off their homes and looking at those of others – with my example, a town might run a Solar Open Homes Day for instance, and use that as an occasion to release an opinion poll. We can survey but also demonstrate opinion through the actions people take and the consequences. And we could initiate campaigns which serve their other interests and values, such as the roof-rewards.

Of course we can also make sure that politicians or other decision-makers see or hear this evidence from those who they already take most notice of as channels (the *Financial Times* perhaps for the Treasury) or as messengers.

All that sends a signal to politicians that there is not just interest or pressure from the Pioneers – the ‘usual suspects’ who say society ought to be taking action on global issues – but that there is political space, in the form of wide public support.

Staying with the solar example we can say to people, literally or in effect, “you’re doing a green thing”, “you’re a bit of a green person”. If this comes with some sort of approval, they are going to feel good about it. This is how ‘green’ can leave its ghetto. What we avoid is saying “you must change” which is a challenge to identity. It is much better to stay with the behaviours and allow people to become, in this case, a solar-type-of-person.

This of course will have a gradual effect on how they see other choices, including bigger ones they do not make directly. It would tend, in this example, to influence their view of whether it is sensible for the government to invest “in renewables” as opposed to ,say, in more nuclear power, or to take a more directly comparable choice, relying solely on gas (why not use solar - after all it works?).

As with anything else, this new behaviour induced opinion gives you a certain but limited amount of new ‘capital’ to work with. A step-by-step progression will be most effective. Pull to a place too far away and the opinion elastic will snap. Push too hard on the individual and the behaviour will be made to feel ‘political’.

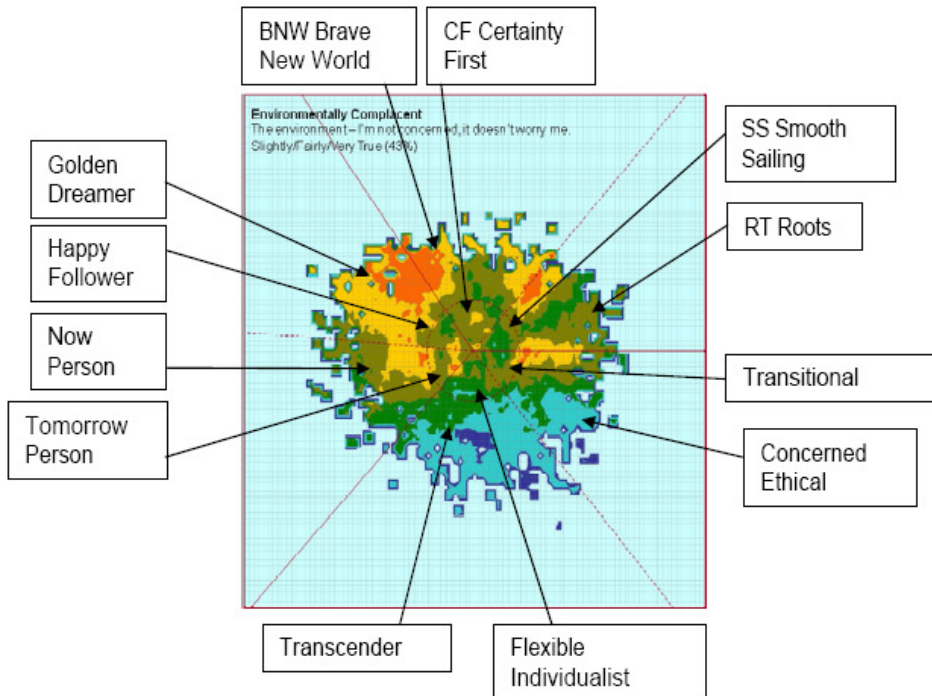
Campaigners need to bear in mind that it is not intelligent to try and convert or ‘promote’ most Prospectors or Settlers (or come to that all Pioneers!) into ‘activists’; nor is this necessary in order to convince politicians that opinion counts. Indeed, it can disguise changes in opinion, or the spread of opinion, if an ‘issue’ still looks to be the sole property of ‘protestors’ who, by definition (framing [8]), have yet to succeed. Most modern politicians are keen to maintain a position ‘in-step-with’ public opinion [9], especially as measured by their favoured pollsters. They are also sensitive to the spread of opinion outside its ‘base’, and campaigners can use this to their advantage.

That’s a proposed model. There now follows an example focused on the Values Mode ‘Golden Dreamer’ but the model should apply to any group – it isn’t about Golden Dreamers specifically.

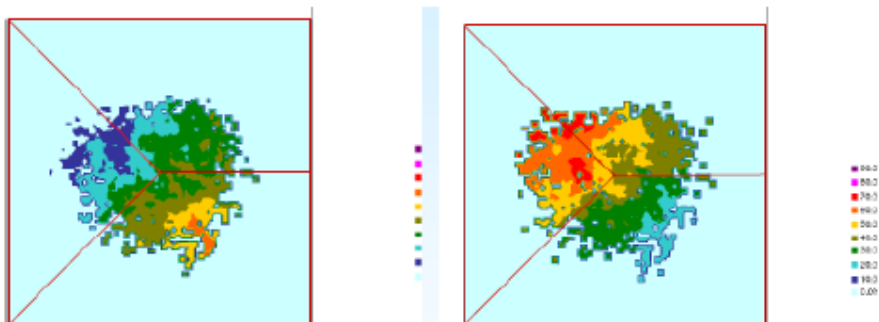
The Case Of The Golden Dreamers And Climate Change

In a previous report [10] we identified the part of the (UK) population centred on the Values Mode ‘Golden Dreamer’ as significant rejectors both of the proposition ‘we should all care for nature’ and action on climate change.

Here for reference, are the Values Modes against a gradient version of the values map (this one showing ‘environmentally complacent’ – it ‘doesn’t bother me’ (purple, then red then orange are highest scores, yellow then green medium, pale then dark blue lowest).



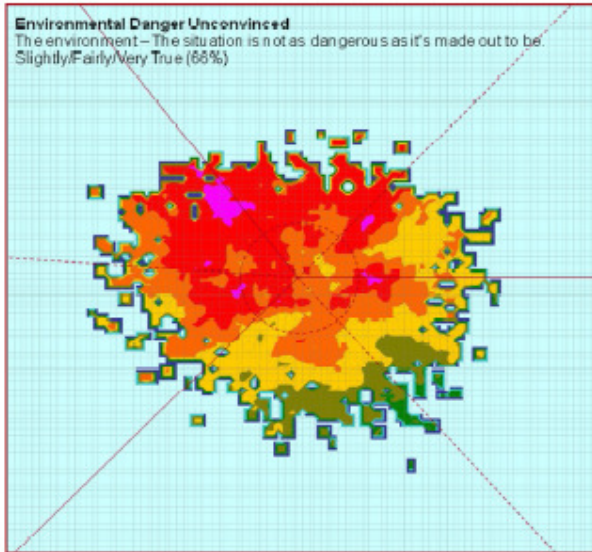
Below is the endorsement (left) and rejection (right) of ‘care for nature’.



Here's a version of 'scepticism' – agreement with "it's not as dangerous as it's made out to be". Although this has quite wide support the Golden Dreamers score highest.

Environmental Danger Unconvinced

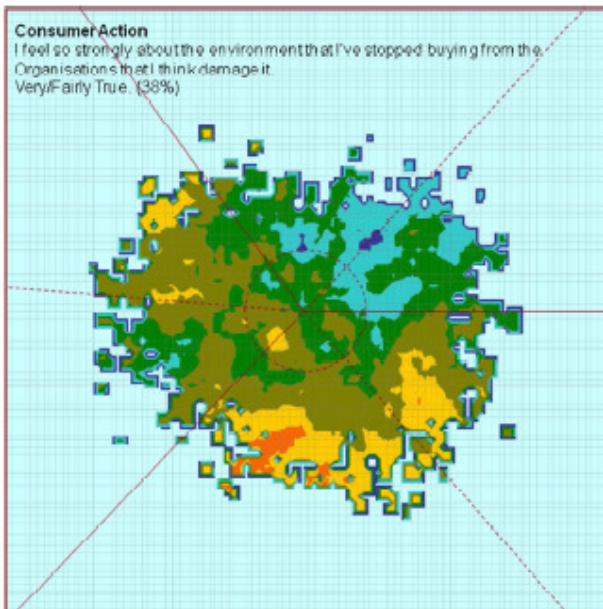
The environment – The situation is not as dangerous as it's made out to be.
Slightly/Fairly/Very True (66%)



Pioneer Transcenders are those most taking action (below) on environmental concern

Consumer Action

I feel so strongly about the environment that I've stopped buying from the Organisations that I think damage it.
Very/Fairly True. (38%)

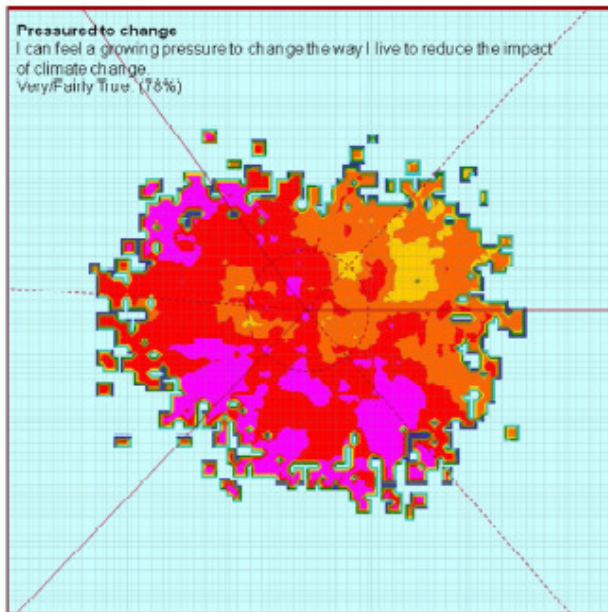


But both Now People (the group which leads change among the Prospectors) and Golden Dreamers both 'feel the call' to change on 'climate', even though they may not be doing that much.

Pressured to change

I can feel a growing pressure to change the way I live to reduce the impact of climate change.

Very/Fairly True. (78%)



So on an issue where we need to generate 'broad support' for actions by politicians, not to have the Golden Dreamers on board is a significant problem.

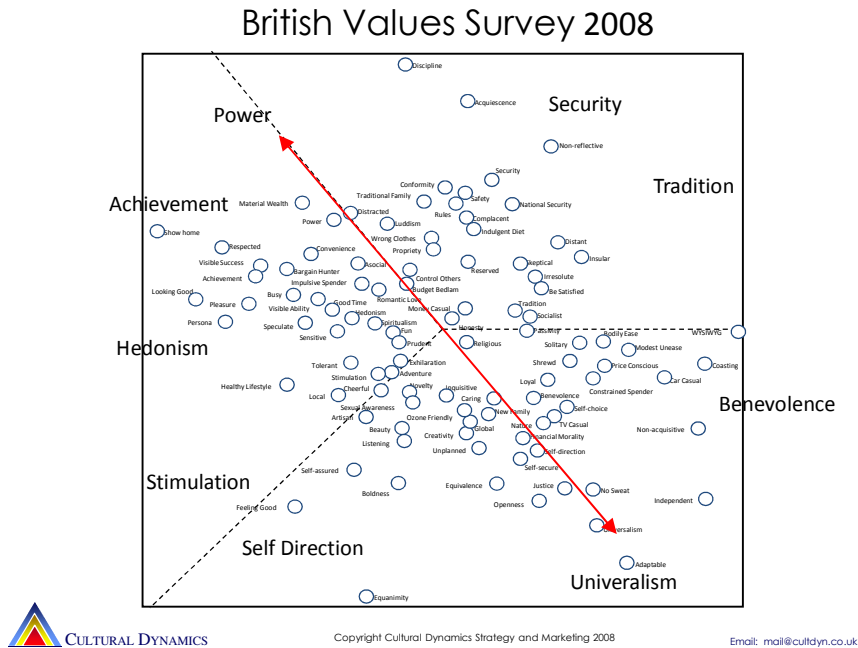
Unlike the 'uber Prospector' Now People, Golden Dreamers are not likely to immediately emulate the Pioneers on 'green lifestyle'. [Recent cases of Now People taking up such change probably include many of the 'Eco' trends reported for instance at <http://www.trendwatching.com/briefing/> and the move away from 4x4s].

On the other hand they are much more gregarious and socially active than the Settlers, who though equally resistant to change 'on climate grounds', are in the UK, both fewer and less socially influential.

The progressive emulation of trends started in the Pioneer area by Prospectors may be expected to 'bring along' the Golden Dreamers in time but on climate change we are constantly reminded by science that we do not have time. One effect of the recession has also been to increase the number of Golden Dreamers at the expense of Now People (by 'drop-back' – Pat Dade pers comm, as part of a general retrenchment of almost all 'edge' Values Modes towards the centre of the Values Map). There is therefore a powerful case for trying to reach them directly, by reformulating climate friendly behaviours in their terms, and by using VBCOP to crack the nut of Golden Dreamer opinion and its influence on politics. Waiting for the Golden Dreamers could be disastrous.

Using Golden Dreamer Values

A good place to start thinking about a strategy for reaching Golden Dreamers is to look at one thing we cannot do, which is to utilise the traditional 'base' thinking of the climate activists. This can be summed up on the values dimensions of Schwartz as 'universalism'.



Prof. Shalom Schwartz works at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and for 40 years, has conducted in depth and international research on personal and cultural values. Working with more than 50 collaborators Shalom Schwartz has used his 'Schwartz Value Inventory' or 'Schwartz values Survey' based on over 60,000 people across 64 nations on all continents to map common values that acted as 'guiding principles for one's life'. In his survey 57 'items' represent 10 individual value types seven cultural 'value orientations'.

Schwartz identifies a series of values 'antagonisms' and these have been calibrated by Cultural Dynamics against the questions used in the British values survey, which maps the 'Golden Dreamers'. These Schwartz dimensions are superimposed on the UK Values Map above.

The important point here is that the Golden Dreamers lie at the 'power' end of an axis which opposes 'universalism'. In other words the values represented by 'universalism' are most strongly rejected by those holding the values around 'power'. It's not hard to see the problem: most appeals to 'save the climate' are based on universalist thinking, and promoted by universalist messengers, who espouse things like care-for-nature, social justice and universal human rights. These are the very messengers and ideas which the Golden Dreamers most reject. We cannot therefore use any of the 'normal' climate campaign 'messages' to shape a project to enlist the Golden Dreamers as part of the general body of opinion favouring 'climate action'. Instead we must venture into what for campaigners, tends to be deep alien territory.

Just how different is this world view from the usually inner directed (Pioneer) standpoint of campaigners, is illustrated below (Pat Dade, *pers comm*):

Pioneers (Inner Directed):	Golden Dreamers:
Outside the box	Inside the box
Driven by ethics	Driven by power
Connection to	Competition with
Process focused	Results focused
Optimize	Maximize
Complexity accounted for	Complexity “cut through”
How it works for the team	How it works for me

For a taste of the sort of tone that this implies, take a look at the ‘green pages’ of the UK newspaper *The Sun* [12].

Into The Unknown

Who are the Golden Dreamers motivationally? Pat Dade of Cultural Dynamics says: “The Golden Dreamers are moving out of Brave New World – a Security-Driven Mode – where life was dominated by thoughts of could, should and ought to. In Golden Dreamer world it’s more a case of “I can have it all but where do I start?”. Golden Dreamers see life as a game which it’s important not to lose. So important in fact that as Golden Dreamer I might be tempted to fudge the results so I look good. I’d see people with power as winners not ‘losers’. Get power and everything else will follow. Power is the dream”.

For Golden Dreamers, winning in itself is seen as transformative. Material wealth and power are seen as transformative – they will become a different person with a different reality. It promises control over others, the respect of others and symbols of value to display, while they look forward to spending and acquiring more. It’s logic that says “win at any cost”.

Highly displayable green goods may be one approach to engage the Golden Dreamers. But acquiring them would also need to be easy to execute and completely detached from any whiff of earnestness, problems, criticisms, justice or altruism. Reaching the Golden Dreamers based on their values means insulating the whole exercise from the values of the ‘usual suspects’. It needs to be very emotional, not rational.

So an ideas brief for Golden Dreamer behaviour for VBCOP might include

A quick way to be a winner

A way to gain wealth or power

Cuts through complexity

Highly displayable

Guaranteed to bring approval

About me personally

We know that the Golden Dreamers will be not just aware of climate as an 'issue' but they emotionally feel the pressure for change (above). However those calls are usually versed in terms of giving something up, thrift, cutting down or going without, which sound to Golden Dreamers like they might stop them acquiring the very things they tend to seek – wealth and symbols of success.

Whereas the more confident Now People feel they have achieved some success and are after a good time (the Schwartz values of stimulation and hedonism), Golden Dreamers first want simpler more definite symbols, mostly in the form of socially safe, valuable stuff, or what looks like it.

These are unresearched conjectures but such symbols might possibly include things like a big-brand electric car (get-myself-some wheels – ie the success of mobility and opening up new social worlds), or award-winning 'five star rated' gadgets for the home (see the 100 ideas house[13]), especially if 'seen on tv' or otherwise recommended as 'the best'. Golden Dreamers like recommendations, especially by celebrities.

Pioneers tend to think 'the best' means innovative but this isn't the case for Golden Dreamers: it needs to established best (but not traditional or an 'old' brand). The immediacy of the need to succeed also means that Golden Dreamers can go for cut-price and short-cuts. This of course can mitigate against quality. They are not going to sign up for Howies' new 'Hand Me Down' clothes range sold on grounds of durability (the 'Eco-Sturdy' trend [14] or the 'Worn Again' range of bags made from old Virgin Airline seats [15] if it means saving up to do so but if 'upcycling' becomes a known fashionable thing to do (the Now People pick it up), they might go for it if it's immediately affordable. In those circumstances Golden Dreamers are equally likely to go for something which looks-like it has been upcycled, as to go for the 'real thing' (in other words, 'bling').

It would though be possible to create a 'green' brand and behaviour specifically designed to match Golden Dreamer values, and then spread that behaviour from the Golden Dreamer centre. This may not be the right thing but one possibility might be to create a game, for instance based on a lottery. The UK Lottery slogan "it could be you" might have been written for Golden Dreamers.

Say for instance it involved 'Better' tickets, usable in a lottery. Better would be green and climate saving but would cut through the complexity of all that by just being Better.

A Better Way To Save The Climate ?

The Better brand could be attached to anything green – from an energy efficient lightbulb (1 ticket ?) to a Toyota Prius (1,000 tickets ?) to an efficient fridge (100 ?), to a home makeover (5,000 ?).

Best of all though a Better Lottery could offer you cash prizes, possibly stuff as well. Simply by being given as prizes, Better could position goods or services as desirable, with the esteem associated with ‘winning’. An ‘instant’ home makeover leaving yours the talk of the neighbourhood and featured in newspapers and on tv, might interest Golden Dreamers as a prize. As of course would £50,000 in cash.

Such a lottery would promote the uptake of green goods and services and thereby cut CO2, earning it some credit with Pioneers and campaigners as a ‘good cause’. By giving a green cachet to gambling, it would enable Golden Dreamers to be green just by indulging in the dream of becoming rich. Every time a prize was given, it would signal that someone was winning by doing something ‘green’. As a channel, the ticketing system and Better brand could be used to introduce and endorse new ‘green behaviours’. If it also involved children as beneficiaries – for example through a form of green premium bonds, it could also invoke the powerful effect of parenting in many people’s identity.

So could a lottery help create political space for climate policies? There can be little doubt that ‘Red Nose Day’ created some for international development policy in the UK. Perhaps this is not the right idea – if so, do you have a better one ?

References

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